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WAR FOOD ADMINISTRATION

Food Distribution Administration

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FOODS AVAILABLE FOR TOMORROW'S CUSTOMERS

Address by Dan A. West before the National Restaurant
Wartime Conference, Cleveland, Ohio, October 21, 1943

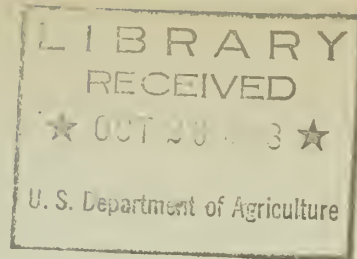
As the tempo of war quickens, increased demands upon our economic life bring home to civilians a fact which was clear many months ago to our leaders: Food is an important weapon in total war. Accustomed to thinking in terms of food "surpluses", we Americans have found the transition to rationing and scarcity of certain foods difficult, even shocking. Arm-chair "food experts" have hurled charges of "bungling", most frequently without citing specific instances of the incompetence about which they write or speak. The housewife, learning the intricacies of point rationing and price ceilings, has little time to ferret out an accurate explanation of the food situation.

You of the restaurant industry can sympathize with the housewife in her struggles with price ceilings and points. In order to understand your problem fully, the housewife would have to know what it means to have her family doubled, her experienced help leave, and her supply of kitchen equipment, silverplate, dishes, and linens reduced. For that has actually happened to the restaurant industry. Many of you are serving twice as many people as you formerly accommodated, and you are accomplishing this service with the same equipment - or less - and with fewer and less experienced employees.

Like the housewife, you may have become confused by rumors or predictions. Like her, you do not have time to seek out for yourself the true facts about the food supply situation. My purpose in coming here today is to give you the best information available from Government sources concerning the food outlook for the coming months.

Before I attempt a commodity analysis, let me remind you of three simple facts which might be called the ABC's of the food picture:

- A. Food production in 1943 reached an all-time high. It is estimated to be 5 percent above 1942, and 32 percent above 1935-39.
- B. Military demands for food are increasing; about one-fourth of our 1943 food supply is going to meet military and lend-lease needs. In spite of this, civilians will eat about 5 percent more food than in 1935-39, and only about 5 percent less than they consumed in the record year of 1941.
- C. The present high level of consumer incomes would make any amount of food seem inadequate. People are buying according to their pocketbooks - and the pocketbooks are fat now. With expanded purchasing power, and in the absence of many durable goods to buy, consumers have turned to buying increasing quantities of food.



One word of warning about interpreting the figures which I shall cite - these are based on per capita averages, and the concept of averages must be kept in mind. When we say, for example, that the average civilian consumed 126 pounds of meat in the 1935-39 period and 123 pounds in 1943, your immediate reaction may be, "That can't be true. I ate a lot more meat before the war than I could get last year. And I certainly had more meat to serve each customer before the war than I could get last year."

That may be true - if it is, you and your customers were eating more meat in pre-war years than the average person ate. Under rationing, the share has been leveled. That still does not mean that every person has exactly the same amount. Differences in income and in individual preferences still exist. Rationing does, however, set an upper limit on the amount which an individual can consume, and increased incomes mean that a larger proportion of our people are able to buy their ration share.

There is one further qualification which must be stated. When we talk about crop forecasts - everything depends upon the weather. In looking ahead to 1944, we must assume that no serious abnormalities of weather will occur. We must assume that drought and floods on a large scale will pass us by, and that winter will not be prolonged abnormally into the spring months, or arrive unduly early. Those assumptions underlie all predictions about next year's crops. Any serious deviations from normal weather conditions will materially decrease the accuracy of these forecasts.

The following estimates of 1944 food supplies, by commodities, were prepared by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, United States Department of Agriculture.

Meat

Meat production in the United States will probably reach an all-time high of 24 billion pounds in 1943, 13 percent above 1942 and 50 percent above the average in 1935-39. Civilian consumption of meat will average about 129 pounds - about 6 pounds less than the consumption in 1942. The fact that we produced more meat in 1943 than in 1942, and that civilians are eating slightly less, of course reflects military and lend-lease requirements, which amount to about 25 percent of the total meat production. For the remainder of this calendar year, you will probably find pork in good supply. It now appears that the marketing of cattle and calves during the last quarter of 1943 will increase, which should ease the beef situation.

Now for 1944 prospects: Meat production in 1944 may be as high as the record production in 1943. Requirements for noncivilian uses, however, may be about 25 percent higher than in 1943. This means that supplies for civilians probably will be smaller. Against this available supply for civilians, we must balance the fact that civilian demand would probably reach 170 pounds per capita, in the absence of rationing.

While the civilian supply of meats in prospect for 1944 is likely to be smaller than this year, the supply may be more evenly distributed. Machinery to control black market operations will be better organized through the new licensing program of the War Food Administration, stricter enforcement of regulations by the Office of Price Administration, and the coordinating efforts of the War Meat Board.

Your cooperation can facilitate this better distribution of meat. As large buyers, you have a direct effect upon the market; you are in a strategic position to help stamp out black markets and promote legitimate, honest dealing in meat.

Poultry

Your menus in recent months have reflected the 1943 poultry supply situation - a record production of chicken meat, about 27 percent higher than in 1942 and over 30 percent above the average in 1935-39. It looks now as if the average civilian will eat about 23 pounds of chicken in 1943. That is about 6 pounds more than the high consumption in 1942.

You of course know that turkey is presently not available for civilians. Our embargo (Food Distribution Order 71) was placed on sales of turkey for civilian use in order to insure a holiday treat for our military forces overseas. In addition to the overseas requirements, which of course had to be purchased early in order to guarantee Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners for our men on distant battle fronts, it is also necessary to buy sufficient turkeys for military camps in this country before the embargo can be lifted. These needs should be met well in advance of the holidays, so I think you can look forward to serving turkey on your Thanksgiving and Christmas menus, as well as on your regular menus sometime before then.

For 1944, the prospects for poultry look like this: The number of chickens raised probably will be somewhat smaller. Commercial broiler production, which is concentrated in deficit feed areas, may also be smaller. However, with a larger slaughter of chickens from laying flocks in prospect, supplies of chicken meat should be about the same as the all-time high we are reaching in 1943.

Turkey production in 1944 may be about as large as this year. Unlike broilers, turkeys are raised largely in the feed surplus sections of the country.

Americans this year are establishing new records for egg consumption. It now seems that we may average about 347 eggs per person in 1943. Supplies for civilians this fall and early winter will probably be the largest on record. In some markets, however, demand may continue to exceed supplies. You know the reasons for this: Eggs are not rationed, incomes are higher, and some markets in deficit areas will reflect a tight supply situation even though the national picture is good.

Now for a look into 1944: Total egg production in 1944 probably will be at least as large as in 1943, if not larger. In spite of war requirements, which are expected to be sizeable, civilian consumption of eggs is likely to be at least as large as this year. We will begin 1944 with about 3 percent more laying hens on farms than we had at the beginning of 1943. However, with a tight feed situation in prospect, particularly in the deficit-feed areas, some reduction in numbers of layers is likely to take place in the second half of 1944.

Dairy Products

Our record for milk production was reached in 1942, when it topped 119 billion pounds. In 1943, we shall probably have about 1 billion pounds less. The most significant changes in consumption this year have been the increased use of milk as fluid milk, and a corresponding decline in civilian per capita consumption of all other major dairy products. We civilians are drinking about 15 percent more milk than we did in 1942. As a result, less milk is available for butter, cheese, evaporated milk, and condensed milk.

You probably know that Government buying of creamery butter has been discontinued until April 1, 1944, and that the entire production of creamery butter during this period will be made available to civilians.

The sales limitations plans now in effect in about 50 urban areas are designed to prevent further increases in the consumption of milk as fluid milk. While milk sales are only checked, cream sales are cut about one-fourth. The purpose is to make more milk and cream available for manufactured dairy products. When quotas are set for classes of consumers, you will probably find that restaurants and other public eating places will receive smaller amounts of fluid milk than were available to them in June, the base period. You will readily see the reason for this: Most of your customers are healthy adults, whose claim upon the milk supply must be met after the needs of children, pregnant women, nursing mothers, and invalids have been met.

Looking ahead to 1944, the final production goal for milk has not been established. The War Food Administration has tentatively set 122 billion pounds - about 4 billion pounds more than the expected production in 1943. The limiting factors which may make this goal impossible of attainment are the feed situation and the competition from the large number of other livestock on farms. If the feed supplies in 1944 are distributed among the several classes of livestock as in 1943, the total milk output in 1944 is not likely to be more than 116 billion pounds.

The outlook for manufactured dairy products in 1944 is for further decline. On percentage basis, the largest declines will be in creamery butter and American cheese.

Edible Fats and Oils

Civilians in 1943 will average about 47 pounds of edible fats and oils in 1943, as compared with 49 pounds in 1942 and 48 pounds in 1935-39. The decline is mainly a result of a smaller per capita supply of butter. Consumption of margarine has increased and probably will average over 1 pound more per person than last year.

For 1944, we can expect that the civilian consumption will be maintained at about the current ration level. On the basis of disappearance during the past few months, this would be about 44 pounds per capita for the year.

Fruits

Production of 6 major deciduous fruits during 1943 is estimated to be 16 percent smaller than a year ago. Citrus fruit production, however, is expected to be about equal to the large 1942 crop. A record grape crop is being harvested this year, and an FDA regulation is in force designed to prevent the diversion of this crop to non-food uses. The crop of plums and prunes will be larger than the 1942 crop, but the commercial crop of apples, peaches, and pears will be smaller.

For 1944, civilian supplies of canned fruit juices are expected to be larger than a year ago, but canned fruits in 1943-44 probably will be only three-fifths as large. With a larger pack of canned fruits in prospect for next season, however, civilian supplies during 1944 may be only slightly less than in 1943.

Vegetables

Per capita consumption of commercial fresh vegetables for the 1943 season as a whole is about 15 to 20 percent below that of 1942. However, it is probable that victory garden production has offset to a considerable extent smaller commercial supplies.

During the next few weeks, cabbage, carrots, lettuce, and onions are expected to move to market in heavy volume. In moderate volume will be tomatoes, snap beans, cauliflower, spinach, beets, and celery.

Now we come to one vegetable which you can expect in great abundance during the next few months: Potatoes. Beginning today and carrying through November 6, potatoes are a Victory Food Selection. We have repeatedly asked you to feature them on your menus during this period and through the following weeks. Here's a chance to serve your customers something which is plentiful and nutritious. Don't let the remembrance of the potato "famine" last spring cause you to serve niggardly portions now -- be generous and build good will. By necessity you have had to take certain foods away from your customers. Here's something which will offset that "taking away" process.

Other vegetables in relative abundance are sweet potatoes, dry beans, and dry peas. You can count on them in the months immediately ahead.

For 1944, we expect a probable increase in the supplies of commercial fresh and canned vegetables. It also appears that civilian supplies of both canned and fresh vegetables in 1944 will again be augmented by production in Victory gardens. Although you are not directly interested in the Victory garden produce, it helps to relieve the demand upon commercial supplies. For this reason, you will want to give all possible encouragement to Victory gardens in your community next season.

Cereals

You undoubtedly know that the picture on cereals is a bright one, both for this year and for 1944. Because cereals are in relative abundance, the War Food Administration has encouraged consumers to eat larger quantities. In addition, we have asked OEA to increase the amount of sugar available for commercial production of jams and jellies, to provide spreads for bread. The new standards for the enrichment of bread improve the nutritive qualities of this important food. Because of the higher levels of enrichment of bread and flour now in effect, the American diet in 1944 may contain more iron and the B vitamins than it contained in previous years.

No doubt you expected a sales talk about soybeans and soya flour. I shouldn't like to disappoint you. The quantity of soya products available to civilians in the next year will be many times larger than in the past. These products are rich in protein, minerals, and vitamins and form an excellent supplement to meat, milk, and eggs. You need not apologize to your customers when you serve them cereals enriched with soya, or waffles made from flour to which soya has been added. Special committees in the Department of Agriculture are devising new ways to use soya products both in kitchen recipes and in prepared foodstuffs so as to take full advantage of this important protein food in the American diet. I know that your Educational Director has been collecting

and distributing information about soy. You can play an important role in popularizing this vital food with your customers, so don't fail to make full use of this "new" food -- which, incidentally, was "new" to the Chinese thousands of years ago.

At the risk of appearing to throw figures at you, I have attempted to give you summary of our present food position and the outlook for 1944. Because the situation varies from area to area, I should like to suggest that you keep yourselves currently informed by asking to be put on the mailing list for market information released by the regional offices of the Food Distribution Administration. Such offices are in San Francisco, Dallas, Chicago, Atlanta, and New York City. If you will write the Marketing Reports Division, Food Distribution Administration, at the city nearest you, I am sure that office will be glad to send you market information which will be helpful.

